

豈有此理

qi3 you3 ci3 li3

There are a lot of things you can't do at local parks and playgrounds. The most common are cycling, bringing pets, swearing, and skateboarding. These prohibitions are set out in the Pleasure Grounds Regulation. Some are weird but understandable, like the banning of pigs, goats, sheep, cattle, etc.

Not allowing the “discharge of missiles” is actually quite necessary for everyone’s safety, although “missiles” probably refer more to fireworks, sling shots or, recently fashionable, bricks pried loose from pavements, than the kind deployed in war zones.

But rules like “no running” in playgrounds or no entering pleasure grounds if you are in a “filthy or verminous condition” are unreasonable and arcane.

The Cambridge dictionary defined “verminous” as “covered by insects,” which is probably needed to deal with problems of personal hygiene like lice infestation. But nowadays, it is actually quite hard to find people who are “covered by insects” except, perhaps, bee keepers.

Idiom by Lon Yan

To these absurd restrictions, the response is “豈有此理” (qi3 you3 ci3 li3), which is a rather common remark when people run into unreasonable situations.

“願” (qi3) is “how?,” “有” (you3) “to have,” “to exist,” “此” (ci3) means “this,” “these: and “理” (li3) “reason,” “logic.” “豈有此理” (qi3 you3 ci3 li3) is, literally, “how could such logic exist?”

It means “How could this be possible?,” “It’s absurd!,” “It’s preposterous!,” “It’s outrageous!,” “utterly unreasonable!” This very versatile idiom can be used in almost any occasion when you want to express outrage. But it is for more serious matters. When the chief executive suggests people swim in the harbor, people may find the idea absurd but “豈有此理” is too strong a comment.

Terms containing the character “理” (li3) include:

理想 (li3 xiang3) - a dream; an ideal

理解 (li3 jie3) - to understand; to comprehend

理性 (li3 xing4) - reason; rationality

理論 (li3 lun4) - theory